



InTouch

October 2005

Volume Eleven - Number Three

County Executive Leads Economic Mission to El Salvador

As part of an economic development mission, County Executive Douglas M. Duncan visited El Salvador in August to promote Montgomery County businesses and to encourage international investments into the County. The mission included private meetings with El Salvador's President Elias Antonio Saca, other officials and business leaders. County Executive Duncan extended an invitation for President Saca to visit Montgomery County, which was accepted.

The trip resulted from an invitation by El Salvador's Ambassador to the United States, René Antonio León Rodriquez. Accompanying the County Executive to El Salvador were Bernadette Musselwhite, Business Development Manager for the Department of Economic Development, and Joe Heiney-Gonzalez, Community Outreach Manager in the Office of Community Outreach whose focus is the County's fast growing Latino community.

The discussions on economic development revolved around Montgomery County's support of new and existing businesses, including the County's business incubators to assist startups. There are 15 biotechnology companies in Montgomery County working on vaccines to fight infectious disease, such as tuberculosis, that could benefit El Salvador and other countries in Central and Latin America.

About half of Maryland's 12,000 Hispanic owned businesses are in Montgomery County, the majority of which are owned by Salvadorans. The six member delegation included local elected officials, representa-

tives of chambers of commerce and Jose Barahona, the Salvadoran born owner of the Pollo Campero restaurant chain.

In addition to economic development, the mission included discussions on stopping gang activity, promoting educational opportunities and other issues of mutual interest. The purpose of the trip was to "enhance an already strong relationship between our two communities," said the County Executive.

In light of the recent attention on illegal gang activity in the region, the County Executive and President Saca discussed greater collaboration on sharing gang intelligence between Salvadoran authorities and local law enforcement agencies in the Washington DC area.

The trip affirmed Montgomery County's ongoing efforts to combat gangs. In February 2004, County Executive Duncan launched the

Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force with Prince George's County Executive Jack Johnson. President Saca acknowledged that a multi-dimensional approach is needed to solve the gang issue. In addition to law enforcement, which had been El Salvador's primary focus, solutions must include providing more educational opportunities, delivering critical social services, promoting family support as alternatives to gangs and conducting intervention measures to steer at-risk youths into



Mr. Duncan
meets with
President Saca of
El Salvador

see **EL SALVADOR** page 6

Message from the County Executive



DOUGLAS M. DUNCAN

Dear Friends:

The hurricanes that recently devastated the Gulf States touched nearly everyone in our community, and I am proud of our quick response to these disasters. Montgomery County's public safety workers provided much-needed search and rescue and recovery help, and our residents responded generously to support the victims of this terrible event.

More than one hundred firefighters, rescue workers, police officers and other public employees were sent from Montgomery County to the Gulf Coast region, including 34 members of our elite Urban Search and Rescue team under formal arrangements with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and a state emergency mutual aid compact. In addition to sending highly skilled career and volunteer personnel, the Montgomery County response included fire engines, a fuel truck, and other equipment and supplies. Our teams rescued survivors of the storm, cleared impassable roadways to

emergency response vehicles, re-opened fire stations and provided clothing and financial assistance to our fellow public safety workers in the Gulf Coast.

I am extremely proud of these brave women and men who have answered the nation's call during this time of crisis. Montgomery County is home to one of only 28 Urban Search and Rescue teams in the entire nation. Because of their unique status, USAR teams are coordinated by the FEMA, which reimburses the County when our public safety workers are called to other jurisdictions.

More than 800 displaced residents of the Gulf States have relocated to Montgomery County, and we have made available to them shelter, emergency financial assistance and an entire array of health and human services. Montgomery College is offering free tuition to displaced college students, and the County has sponsored a number of fundraising events including the Silver Spring Jazz Festival – featuring New Orleans native Wynton Marsalis – which raised \$22,000, and the Roberta Flack Benefit Concert on October 5 at Strathmore Concert Hall which raised money for a public safety memorial as well as hurricane relief.

To prepare for emergencies that may hit our area, I urge all residents to take the time now to develop your own personal and family emergency preparedness plans. Please see the article on page 7, visit www.montgomerycountymd.gov or call (240) 777-2200 for more information on specific steps you can take to better prepare yourself and your family for emergency situations.

Montgomery County is continuing to do its share to help hurricane victims, as are many community organizations, faith based groups, families and individuals. Please continue to open your hearts and homes to provide whatever assistance you can. Please call the Volunteer Center at (240) 777-2600 for more information on how you can provide relief assistance to those who were hit so hard by one of history's worst disasters.

Sincerely,

Douglas M. Duncan, County Executive

Douglas M. Duncan, County Executive
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Parker Hamilton, Assistant CAO

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Update on Gang Prevention Task Force *by Traci Anderson*

Over one and a half years ago, on February 26, 2004, County Executive Douglas M. Duncan convened the Montgomery County Gang Prevention Task Force to actively combat the growth of illegal gang activity in the Washington metropolitan region. Concurrently, in partnership with Prince George's County Executive Jack Johnson, the County Executives convened the Joint County Gang Prevention Task Force to address the problem on a regional basis.

The Task Forces were charged with assessing the nature and scope of the gang problem and making recommendations to prevent gang involvement and gang violence. As a result of this work, the Task Forces put forward over 80 recommendations designed to address gangs in the two counties.

To guide these efforts, Mr. Duncan appointed the Montgomery County Gang Prevention Steering Committee, co-chaired by Director of Health and Human Services Carolyn W. Colvin and Police Chief J. Thomas Manger. The Steering Committee is composed of chairs, directors and/or other executive level staff from organizations that have direct dealings with youth, gang members and communities affected by gang activity. They include Department of Health and Human Services, Police Department, African American Advisory Group, Asian American Advisory Committee, Latin American Advisory Committee, Montgomery County Public Schools, Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation, Department of Recreation, Regional Services Centers and the Circuit Court.

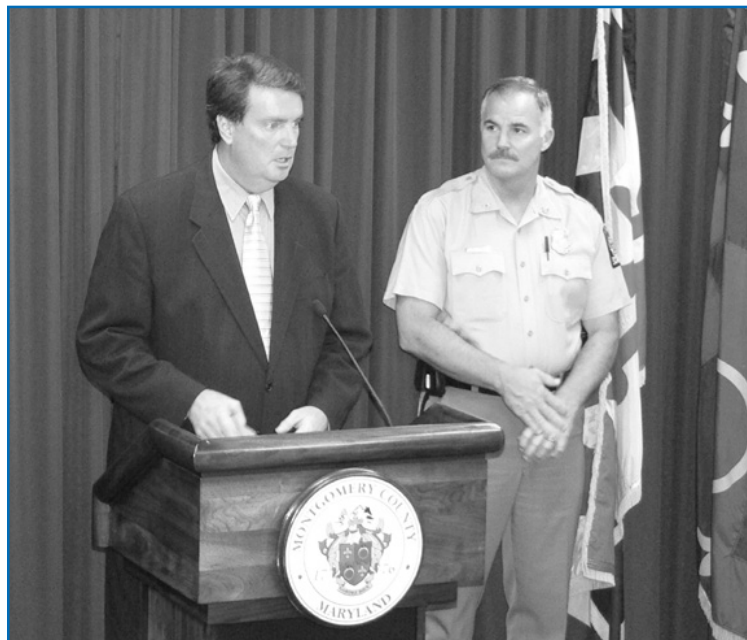
The Steering Committee is supported by three Task Groups responsible for active coordination and implementation of services to support the County's gang prevention initiative. The Information and Management Task Group is responsible for improving collection, analysis and sharing of data. This group is also responsible for information on investigations and legislative strategies. The Community Action Task Group is responsible for planning, coordinating and creating collaborative service delivery through public, non-profit, school, faith-based and business sector partnerships. The Community Awareness Task Group is responsible for outreach, education, training and web-based information.

The goals of the County's gang prevention initiative are to aggressively address gang problems in the County through prevention, intervention and suppression. These efforts include promoting education and awareness of gang activity through schools, churches, youth groups and other community organizations; increasing and supporting existing community based services to provide structured activities that include after-school programming and youth mentoring; promoting educational and economic support, including jobs and skills development, tutoring to improve academic achievement and school attachment; promoting access to recreational activities and healthy leisure interests.

The County is focusing on several strategies to address the issue of gangs, including enhancing information and referral services for parents and other individuals who have questions or need services. Residents can call (240) 777-1245, the Health and Human Services Information and Referral hotline for information about services. The County is also working with local plastic surgeons to remove gang tattoos and other body markings for individuals who wish to end gang involvement; developing the Youth Leadership Council whose membership will include at-risk youths to provide guidance on promoting alternate activities; promoting the Crossroads Youth Opportunities Center in collaboration with Prince George's County which will serve as a hub for gang prevention in the Takoma Park/Langley Park area. Crossroads will provide behavioral health assessments and counseling, income and employment support, mentoring, outreach and other services.

These efforts will be coordinated in the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) by a Youth Prevention Coordinator. Recently, HHS hired Luis Cardona for this important position. Luis comes to Montgomery County with over 13 years experience working with gang involved youth in the Washington metropolitan area and throughout the country. He has successfully mediated gang disputes; coordinated intervention strategies with faith-based organizations, schools and other community-based organizations; and partnered with government officials and agencies to develop strategic initiatives in gang prevention.

For questions or more information regarding the gang prevention initiative, contact Kate Garvey, Chief for Children, Youth and Family Services at (240) 777-4580 or Traci Anderson, Special Assistant, Department of Health and Human Services at (240) 777-1269.



Montgomery County Assists Katrina Victims

Montgomery County has directed many of its resources to assist the victims of Hurricane Katrina both in the Gulf states and here at home. Called one of the worst natural disasters in American history, Katrina hit Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama the week before Labor Day and left enormous devastation in its wake.

Before the hurricane fully subsided, a 34 member squad from the Urban Search and Rescue Team (USAR) left Montgomery County on August 30 and drove through the night to arrive in Waveland, Mississippi the next morning to perform search and rescue operations.

County Executive Douglas M. Duncan and Fire and Rescue Chief Tom Carr announced a week later that another team of firefighters, along with rescue equipment and apparatus, were being sent to New Orleans to supplement the firefighters from Montgomery County already in the region.

In addition, the County dispatched Fire Chief Thomas Carr, Police Chief Thomas Manger and Homeland Security Director Gordon Aoyagi and their top deputies to New Orleans to lend support to firefighters and police officers from Montgomery County already in the city and to offer additional assistance to New Orleans officials. While in New Orleans, Chief Carr met with his counterpart in the city to offer additional personnel to support recovery efforts. The County also plans to donate a fire truck to the New Orleans Fire Department.

Here in the County, Executive Duncan charged the Volunteer Center to serve as a clearinghouse for residents seeking information on donations, volunteer opportunities and other efforts to help victims. The Volunteer Center can be reached at (240) 777-2600.

For victims or friends and families of victims seeking immediate housing, health or social services, the Crisis Center now serves as a one-stop center for all services, including emergency financial assistance, emergency shelter, transitional housing, mental health services, health screening and connection to the public schools. The Crisis Center is available 24 hours a day. The Crisis Center can be reached by calling the HHS hotline at (240) 777-1245.

The County is also preparing to house 1,000 displaced residents from New Orleans and other Gulf Coast cities. A week after the hurricane, Montgomery County was already housing 70 families who were left homeless, and had enrolled 25 children in the public

schools. The County Executive also pledged free tuition for displaced college students to continue their education in Montgomery College.

County employees who are members of the National Guard will receive full County salaries when activated to support relief efforts. Employees will also receive time off with pay when volunteering through faith-based or nonprofit organizations to help Katrina victims in the Gulf states. The County's five Regional Services Centers are accepting donations of nonperishable food and personal hygiene items. Ride On buses collected 11,000 pounds of nonperishable foods as part of its "Give and Ride" program. The Silver Spring Jazz Festival was turned into a Katrina fundraiser. Highlighted by jazz great Wynton Marsalis, a native of New Orleans, the festival on September 10 drew over 20,000 people and raised over \$22,000 for Katrina relief.

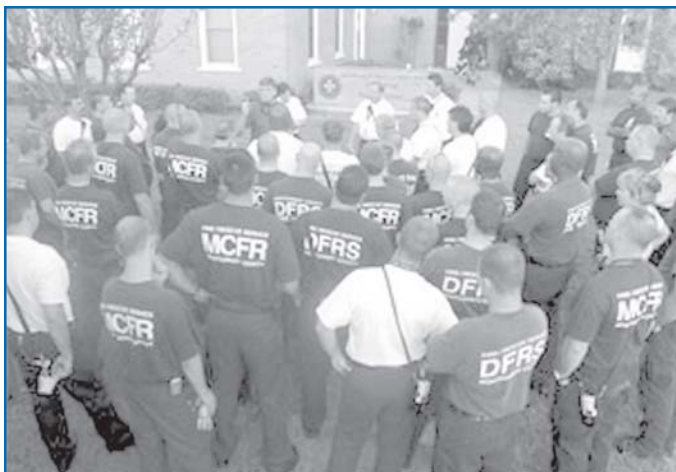
The County Executive has placed the issue of emergency management as a priority ever since September 11, 2001. The County constructed a new Emergency Operations Center that is co-located with the Public Safety Communications Center, the Emergency Communications Center and the Transportation Management Center. The County also has a new radio system that allows for better coordination and integration of emergency response capabilities.

With the newly created Montgomery County Department of Homeland Security, all emergency responses are now coordinated under one agency. The Department of Fire and Rescue was also restructured and is now under the command of one Fire Chief who has full authority over all fire, rescue and emergency medical services.

The Executive has also initiated a reassessment of the Washington region's emergency preparedness plan and has requested the State of Maryland to do the same. Through the Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments (COG), Executive Duncan led a discussion with other regional leaders to evaluate and strengthen the capital region's preparedness plans

for natural and other emergencies.

More information is available on the County's website www.montgomerycountymd.gov on making donations, volunteering, receiving emergency services and establishing an emergency preparedness plan for your family. More information is also available by calling the Offices of the County Executive at (240) 777-2500.



PROFILE: Art Holmes, DPWT Director

Arthur Holmes, Jr. started service as Director of Montgomery County's Department of Public Works and Transportation (DPWT) in 2004 and came to the job not only with experience as Director of Go Montgomery! but also with over 30 years of active military experience specializing in command of logistics and material acquisition operations in the U.S. Army. He retired in 1987 with the rank of Major General, completing his last assignment as Commanding General of the Army's Tank – Automotive Command.

While in the Army, Art earned a number of awards and decorations.

These include the Distinguished Service Medal, Legion of Merit, Bronze Star Medal, Meritorious Service Medal, the Army Commendation Medal and the Joint Services Commendation Medal.

In later civilian life, Art was President and Chief Executive Officer of Automated Sciences Group, Inc., a minority owned high-tech company in Silver Spring. He also served as a Commissioner on the Montgomery County Planning Board for the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. Subsequently, he was appointed Chair of the Board and Vice-Chair of the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission. He was Director of Go Montgomery! from 2002 to 2004. Go Montgomery! is a DPWT agency dedicated to implementing the County's Master Plan in all transportation areas including road construction and enhancing pedestrian safety and mobility.

Art's military background has prepared him well for the diverse set of responsibilities in DPWT. With 1,700 employees, this large department is responsible for providing a wide array of critical services for



ART HOLMES

County residents. Some of these services are more obvious, such as the Ride On bus system, real time traffic reporting, highway maintenance, parking and traffic safety. DPWT is also responsible for solid waste collection, recycling, physical maintenance of County facilities, bikeways and capital construction projects. The Fleet Management Division of DPWT maintains and tracks over 3,000 automobiles, buses and pieces of heavy machinery used in daily County operations. Taxicab regulation, sidewalk repair, and tree, leaf and snow removal are also DPWT operations.

Some of Art's goals as DPWT Director are to use smart planning and the latest technology to help prevent gridlock on our roads, improve the region's air quality, promote development projects that will minimize environmental impacts, encourage telecommuting and increase safety and accessibility for all pedestrians.

Art graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in chemistry from Hampton University in Virginia and earned a Master of Business Administration degree from Kent State University in Ohio. A member of the ROTC in college, he was commissioned a Second Lieutenant upon graduation. Art and his wife Wilma live in Olney and have four children and six grandchildren. Art belongs to the Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, serves on the boards of Montgomery County Parks Foundation, Shady Grove Hospital Foundation, Leadership Montgomery and Olney Theater in addition to a variety of other organizational boards in Montgomery County.

For more information on the operations of Montgomery County's Department of Public Works and Transportation, call (240) 777-7170.

Alert Montgomery

Montgomery County has activated a new emergency text alerting system that will provide timely notification to individuals who live and work in the County about emergency incidents, severe weather threats, significant transportation disruptions or events and any changes in the threat level for terrorist attacks. Individuals who sign up for the service can select the ways they prefer to receive the text message alerts – by email, cell phone, Blackberry, PDA or pager.

"Alert Montgomery strengthens our homeland security yet again," said Montgomery County Executive

Douglas M. Duncan. "Keeping our residents informed about what to do in an emergency is key to keeping them safe," said Gordon Aoyagi, director of Montgomery County's Homeland Security Department. "I encourage everyone who has an electronic communication device to sign up."

Individuals can sign up for the free service by going to the Montgomery County website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov and clicking on "Alert Montgomery". For more information, call (240) 777-2200.



El Salvador *from page 1*

productive activities. The County Executive shared the County's three pronged approach to prevent, intervene and suppress gang activity.

Accompanying the County Executive to El Salvador is only one of many duties for Joe Heiney-Gonzalez, who has advised Mr. Duncan for almost two years on issues facing the fast growing Latino community. The Latino community now makes up over 13% of the County's population and has grown drastically over the past two decades.

Prior to joining the Offices of the County Executive, Joe was Manager for Hispanic Customer Services at the County's Department of Health and Human Services. A social worker by profession, he has over 28 years of experience working on community based service delivery for a number of local, state and national organizations. They include Washington DC Latino Economic Development Corporation, the Council on Philanthropy, the national office of Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Charities agencies in Texas and New York.

Recognizing the needs of the Latino community in the Gaithersburg and Germantown area, Joe was instrumental in building the Upcounty Latino Network. As many Latinos in the County are recent immigrants, Joe also serves as co-chair of the Washington Area Partnership for Immigrants. He sits on planning committees for the school system to address issues of academic achievement among Latino youth. He was lead staff to the Gang Prevention Task Force since its inception.

Joe is a native of Houston, Texas and is the youngest of 11 children. His parents immigrated from Mexico with the dream of providing a better life for themselves and their children. Joe served in the US Army as a Psychiatric/Social Work Specialist in North

Carolina, Vietnam and California. He also served as president of the Montgomery County Hispanic Employees Association. For more information about Montgomery County's outreach efforts to the Latino community, please call (240) 777-2525.

County Commemorates 15th Anniversary of Americans with Disabilities Act

by Betsy Luecking

On July 26, 1990 the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) was signed into law to enhance civil rights protection for individuals with disabilities. On July 26, 2005 County Executive Douglas M. Duncan commemorated the 15th anniversary of the passage of the landmark legislation by issuing a Proclamation to bring more attention to the needs of individuals with disabilities and reconfirming his commitment to providing equal opportunities for all residents in the areas of employment, access, housing and public accommodations.

The goal is to have full participation and inclusion of people with disabilities in all aspects of community life. Montgomery County has taken substantial steps in many areas to removing barriers, including providing more than \$8 million in grants for developmental disability services, more than \$1 million in grants to the Residential Rehabilitation Program for housing assistance for people with mental illness and more than \$4 million in other grants for community nonprofit agencies and community service partners.

The County has also completed more than \$4 million in facilities renovations to ensure compliance with ADA requirements, including installing more than 4,000 curb cuts to provide greater mobility access. The County's Ride-On bus fleet became 100 percent accessible in September 2004. Downtown Silver Spring now has accessible pedestrian signals at traffic lights to alert pedestrians who are blind or who have low vision when it is safe to cross.

For more information on Americans with Disabilities Act compliance in the County, please contact Nancy Greene, ADA Compliance Officer at (240) 777-3247 Voice, (240) 777-1398 TTY. For more information on the work of the Montgomery County Commission on People with Disabilities or for other information on programs that serve people with disabilities, please call Betsy Luecking, Program Manager, Department of Health and Human Services, Aging and Disability Services, Commission on People with Disabilities at (240) 777-1256 Voice/TTY.

Personal Emergency Preparedness Planning

The aftermath of the hurricanes that recently hit the Gulf states is a good reminder for all Montgomery County residents to develop personal and family plans to deal with emergencies. It is unlikely that the mid-Atlantic region will be hit by a natural disaster of such magnitude to require the massive evacuations experienced in Louisiana or Texas in past weeks.

However, residents should have enough food, water, medications and other essential supplies at home, at work and in their cars to last several days in case of severe inclement weather or other large scale emergencies.

Montgomery County has developed the Plan 9 guide for residents. It is a simple guide to nine essential items to help residents shelter in-place during emergencies. The nine items are:

1. **Water:** keep one gallon of bottled water per person per day for drinking and washing. Replace the water every six months.
2. **Food:** keep a supply of nonperishable food to last 3 to 5 days per person.
3. **Clothing:** keep a change of clothes and footwear per person. Consider packing blankets, raingear and outerwear in case of severe weather.
4. **Medications:** collect three days worth of prescription medications. Be sure to mark the expiration dates and change as needed.
5. **Flashlight:** keep a bright flashlight for power out ages. Do not use candles as they are fire hazards. Check on batteries.
6. **Can opener:** keep a manual can opener. Buying foods with pull-open cans is also helpful.
7. **Radio:** a battery powered radio will keep you updated on news and developments. Crank operated or solar powered radios are also helpful. Check on batteries.
8. **Hygiene items:** pack the basics such as soap, toilet paper, toothbrush and toothpaste. Moist toiles are useful.
9. **First aid items:** antiseptic, gloves, bandages, nonprescription medicine. Many stores have pre-made kits.

For more information about Plan 9 or personal emergency preparedness plans, call the Health and Human Services hotline at (240) 777-1245 or visit www.makeaplan.org or www.montgomerycountymd.gov.

Upcoming Events

The Office of Community Outreach (OCO) is hosting or partnering with other offices and organizations on a number of events in the upcoming months. All residents are invited to attend these events, which are at no cost and open to the public. For more information, call OCO at (240) 777-2500.

Hispanic Heritage Month Events: The Offices of the County Executive, Montgomery County Public Libraries, the Multicultural Library Advisory Committee and the County's Friends of the Library are hosting a variety of programs at local library branches to celebrate the contributions made by Hispanics throughout the history of the United States. This year marks the 400th anniversary of the first publication of Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, one of the most famous and important books and characters in world literature. For more information on Hispanic Heritage Month events, call Ms. Yuli Estler at (240) 777-0024.

"Buena Vida": Montgomery County will cap off Hispanic Heritage Month with a community health fair on October 16, 2005 from 12 noon to 5 PM at Wheaton Regional Park, 2000 Shorefield Road, Wheaton. The fair promotes active services for the Latino/Hispanic community. Health information will be available from County agencies and nonprofit organizations. Relay races, folk dancing, music, contests, face painting, clowns and games will be available for children and their families. Free non-invasive health screenings will be available. Call (240) 777-3221 for more information.

Understanding Diversity Through Art at BlackRock Center for the Arts: Exhibit of artworks by 14 middle school student award recipients will run through the month of October. Reception to be held on October 27, 2005 from 6:30 to 8:30. Exhibit and reception will be held at BlackRock Center for the Arts, 12901 Town Commons Drive, Germantown, phone (301) 528-2260.

Portrait of Life moves to Executive Office Building: Photographs of 30 Holocaust survivors who are currently living in Montgomery County will be displayed during October in the Lobby Gallery of the Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville. First exhibited at Montgomery College, these poignant photographs are accompanied by short biographies of the survivors who tell their stories of facing cruelty and inhumanity, and then finding hope and renewal. Call (240) 777-2500.

Diversity Week Celebrations: Montgomery County will host events from October 24 to November 2 to celebrate the diversity of the County's residents and workforce. On weekdays from October 24 to November 1, the County is hosting events during the lunch hour. These lunchtime events are sponsored by employee organizations, the Committee for Ethnic Affairs, the Commission for Women and Montgomery College. Diversity Week is led by the Office of Human Resources in partnership

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Upcoming Events

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with the event sponsors, the Washington Suburban Sanitary Commission, Montgomery County Public Schools and the Diversity Council. The main Diversity Day events will begin at 9:00 AM on November 2 with speakers, entertainment, specialty foods and other festivities throughout the day in the Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville. For more information, call Angela Washington at (240) 777-5015.

Asian American community Open Forum:

As a follow up to the May 2005 meeting, the County Executive's Asian American Advisory Committee will host an Open Forum meeting on November 5, 2005 from 1 to 4 PM for community groups to discuss issues and needs. County agencies will be on hand to provide information about services and programs for residents. Location: Council Office Building, 100 Maryland Avenue, Rockville. Call (240) 777-2524 for more information.

Native American Heritage Month: Called one of the largest Native American events east of the Mississippi River, Montgomery County will host the 8th annual Native American Festival on November 12, 2005 from 10 AM to 5 PM in the Terrace Level cafeteria of the Executive Office Building, 101 Monroe Street, Rockville. The event will feature the traditional Mini Pow Wow and many other activities to commemorate American Indian and Alaska Native heritage. For more information, call (240) 777-2525.

Commemorating the life and legacy of Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.:

Celebrating the theme "To Form a More Perfect Union," Montgomery County will host its annual tribute to Dr. King on January 16, 2006 with community service projects at 12:30 PM and a formal tribute at 3:00 PM. All events, including a community reception, will take place at the Bethesda North Marriott Conference Center, 5701 Marinelli Road, North Bethesda. For more information, call (240) 777-2500.